

REMARKS

In the above-identified Office Action, the Examiner has rejected claims 3-5 and 10-11 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over the patent to Rigo.

Applicant has amended claim 3 so that it now includes a distributing lever that comprises a pair of guide plates arranged with a predetermined distance there between so as to form a gap of a predetermined width into which a coin-shaped IC card is inserted. Wall body in the claim 2 temporarily stops the movement of an IC card inserted into the gap.

Rigo has a distributing lever (baffle) 191 but does not have a gap defined by a pair of guide plates, and therefore, an inserted coin is not temporarily stopped.

According to currently amended claim 3, immediately after information is read from and written onto a coin-shaped IC card that is temporarily retained in the gap of the distributing lever by the wall, the coin-shaped IC card is lead to a selected one of the guide paths located at both sides of the wall body.

According to the structure of Rigo, after information is read from and written into a coin-shaped IC card 10 that is temporarily stopped by the wall body (positioning member) 19, the IC card 10 is released from the temporal stopping by the operation of the wall body 19 so that the IC card 10 is lead to the distributing lever 191. Thereafter, the coin-shaped IC card is lead to a selected one of the guide paths.

Comparing the structure of Rigo with that of the currently amended claim 3, in Rigo, an additional guide path is required that guides the temporarily stopped IC card 10 to the distributing lever 191, which results in an increase in the size of the reader/writer.

Further, while the structure recited in currently amended claim 3 requires only a single drive unit for driving the distributing lever so that the temporarily retained IC card is lead to the selected guide path after the read/write operations, Rigo requires both a driving unit for driving the wall body 9 and a driving unit for driving the distributing lever 191, which results in an increase in the manufacturing cost, as well as in the size of the reader/writer.

Claims 2 and 6-9 have been rejected as being unpatentable over the patent to Rigo in view of Hossfield et al. The Examiner has stated that it would have been obvious to employ Rigo's stopping mechanism of coin-shape with a partition plate for processing reading and writing on the coin-shaped card and distributing the card to an appropriate guide path after the process results. Applicant disagrees, noting that Hossfield et al. discloses a partition plate (wheel

or disc) 22 having a notch that opens or closes a guiding path by rotating the partition plate about a shaft 30.

The partition plate 22 of Hossfield et al. has a structure in which a coin is temporarily stopped by colliding the coin with the edge of the notch. Therefore, if a coin has a large diameter which is about the same as that of the partition plate 22, the notch must be as large as the coin. However, the shaft 30 prevents such a large notch to be formed.

In the structure recited in currently amended claim 2, a partition plate 13 is formed at a leading end surface of the shaft 12 such that the partition plate 13 protrudes from the leading end surface of the shaft 12, and a coin-shaped IC card is temporarily stopped by colliding the IC card with the partition plate 13. With this structure, the shaft 12 is not an obstacle for the formation of the partition plate.

Therefore, the structure of the currently amended claim 2 would not have been obvious from Rigo when combined with the partition plate 22 and shaft 30 of Hossfield et al.

Applicant hereby requests reconsideration and re-examination thereof.

With the above amendments and the remarks, this application is considered ready for allowance, and Applicants earnestly solicit an early notice of same. If the Examiner believes that a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of the subject application, he is respectfully requested to call the undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



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